

Summer 2003



# Refuge Reporter

Happenings at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

Volume 6, Issue 3

## Grab Your Fishing Poles for Kids' Free Fishing Day on June 7

*By Becky Goche, Park Ranger*

The 23rd annual "Great Saginaw River Free Fishing Fun Day" will be held on Saturday, June 7, 2003, at Ojibway Island in Saginaw, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. This contest is open to children aged 3- to 15-years-old. Children will have a chance to win prizes with the fish they catch. The more they catch, the better their chances of winning! Prizes include bicycles, fishing poles, camping equipment, games, and sporting equipment.

Children need to furnish their own fishing poles and bait. There will be a limited supply of free bait available. Many free refreshments like cookies, snocones and orange drink, will be served. Hot dogs will

also be available for a small charge.

Numerous partners, including the Refuge, are involved in putting on this event – The Saginaw News, City of Saginaw, Meijer Stores, Saginaw Field and Stream Club, Sons of Italy, the Dow Chemical Michigan Division Walleye Club and others. Partners organize the event and provide prizes, food, tents, bait and volunteer labor the day of the event.

The Free Fishing Fun Day coincides with Michigan's "Free Fishing Weekend," June 7 and 8, 2003. During this weekend, you don't need a fishing license to fish.

We need several friendly volunteers to help out during the morning. We need a few early risers to help us with set up be-

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### Special Points:

- *The Refuge Open House Weekend is September 6 and 7. The entire Refuge will be open to deer scouting, hiking and bicycling, during daylight hours only. Self guided auto tour and vote for your favorite photos in the Second Annual Refuge Amateur Photo Contest on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.*

## Deer Applications Due August 1, 2003

People interested in hunting deer on the Refuge now need to get their applications in by August 1, 2003 (postmark). Information sheets are available June 2 at the Refuge, Green Point, and several local businesses that sell hunting licenses. You can also check our website at <http://midwest.fws.gov/shiawassee>, click on hunting.

With the earlier deadline, hunters will now know if they have been selected in time for the Refuge Open House Weekend, when the entire Refuge is open to deer scouting.

When applying, please read and follow the directions carefully so that your application is not voided. Good luck!

# Living in a Hackberry Tree Down by the River

By David Peters, Tractor Operator

Few things define a natural location quite as well as its plants. Shiawassee NWR, though inhabited by a fair share of plant species with widespread distribution, as well as some introduced “weeds,” is still a refuge for plants native to the floodplains of slow moving rivers in the eastern Midwest. Among these is the tree, *Celtis occidentalis*, commonly known as hackberry. Of the five species of this genus in North America, hackberry, along with its southern counterpart sugarberry, are distributed throughout much of the eastern U.S. But within this broad general area, hackberry primarily occurs only in the moist rich soils that are typical along rivers. It doesn't occur naturally north of the central hardwood forest region; therefore, the trees at Shiawassee NWR are near its northerly limit in the state of Michigan.

Though hackberry trees may be found growing here and there throughout the Refuge, it is not by any means a dominant tree species. It occurs in greatest densities near or along river banks and wooded dikes. Hackberry bark is composed of a smooth base with highly contrasting rough ridges, so there is no mistaking its identity in any season. Its “berries” are dark purple, more or less a third of an inch in diameter, and contain a relatively large nutlet. The amount of fruit produced by hackberry trees growing on the Refuge is inconsistent from year to year. In years when generous fruiting does occur, the multitude of berries will linger on the trees until early winter, when they are harvested by flocks of waxwings and robins. Those that fall to the ground are undoubtedly gathered up by squirrels, mice, and such.

Representing a native plant species, and a source of nourishment for migratory birds and small mammals, are not the only ways in which the hackberry makes its unique contribution to the Refuge biological community. Like a number of other plants, (a common example of which are milkweeds), the hackberries are the exclusive hosts to several other living things.

As many people know, the monarch depends upon the milkweeds as its larval food plant. The hackberries have not one, but three species of butterfly depending solely upon them. Caterpillars of the hackberry emperor, tawny emperor, and American snout butterflies eat only hackberry leaves. As their name suggests, the two emperors are closely related, but avoid competition for food by feeding on different age leaves. The adults rarely visit flowers for nectar; rather, they feed on tree sap, rotting fruit, and carrion. The American snout is the only species of butterfly in North America in which the structure that houses its proboscis is elongated, hence its common name. They

migrate north to and from the Refuge each year in varying numbers. The casual visitor to the Refuge might not notice these three butterflies as readily as monarchs and some others, for they are less common, and as forest dwellers, they are well camouflaged and not brightly colored.

It is not unusual to find hackberry leaves with small button-like growths known as “galls” on their lower surface. Hackberry galls are the result of the tree's reaction to at least a couple different organisms - psyllids, (commonly known as jumping plant lice), and midges. When immature, these parasites release growth regulating chemicals as they feed on leaf tissue. These chemicals cause the adjacent leaf tissue to form a gall, enclosing the parasite and providing it a relatively safe place to develop into an adult. Hackberries are the sole host of a number of different gall-making species, such as the hackberry button gall, hackberry star gall, and hackberry melon gall. The gall that each induces is structurally unique to that species.

An even smaller organism, though visually more obvious when it is present, is a powdery mildew fungus that is specific to hackberry. In apparent association with a mite, this fungus affects the end shoots of the tree, causing it to sprout several small branches. The result is commonly known as a “witch's broom”. These atypical formations, often quite numerous on a single tree, are readily visible not only as “brooms” in the winter, but as abnormally dense clumps of leaves during the summer. Like butterfly caterpillars and galls, witch's brooms do not affect the health of their host.

In addition to the hackberry specialists just discussed, there are potentially any number of other insects and other organisms not specific to hackberries living on, and in, the leaves, twigs, bark and roots of each tree. Together, they are but one example of the richness of life in the natural world that occurs within the protective boundaries of Shiawassee NWR. It is a wealth easily shared with visitors, as hackberry trees can be found growing here and there along all of the Refuge's hiking trails. You are encouraged to pause at *Celtis occidentalis* when you come across it, and take a closer look at this unique river bank tree of interesting bark and a whole lot more.

*“The hackberries have not one, but three species of butterfly depending solely upon them.”*

## Friends Group to Host Cookout on June 18

The Friends of Shiawassee NWR will have their first Friends Cookout at the Refuge's Cass River Unit in Bridgeport on June 18, 2003. The picnic will run from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and will feature chicken and pork barbecue. Cost for the picnic is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children aged 12 and under. Numerous door prizes will be given away. The Cass River Unit is the proposed site for the Great Lakes Discovery Center and is located behind the Cracker Barrel Restaurant and the Baymont Motel off of Dixie Highway. Games, displays and hiking trails will be available for your fun and recreation. All the funds raised from this event will go for the development of the new visitor center and facilities on the Cass River Unit.

### **\$5000 Grant for Trail Development**

The Saginaw Community Foundation has awarded the Friends group a \$5,000 grant to be used for trail development at the Cass River Unit. Dan Patillo, Board of Director, submitted the grant proposal earlier this spring. Dan is a student at Central Michigan University and spends a lot of his time writing grants and helping out with other projects on the Refuge.

### **\$250,000 Grant Awarded**

The Great Lakes Fishery Trust awarded the Friends

group a grant for \$250,000. This grant will be used for a marketing and business plan and the preliminary design of the proposed Great Lakes Discovery Center in Bridgeport. The Center will highlight fisheries, wildlife and the habitats of the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem. Once the plans are complete, the Friends will begin the major campaign to raise private funds for the Center.

### **Board Meetings**

Board meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at Green Point ELC. Everyone is invited to attend.

For more information, contact the Friends of Shiawassee NWR, P.O. Box 20129, Saginaw, MI 48602 or call Joe Davila, President at (989) 642-5117 or email: joedavila@chartermi.net

*"Your membership is important to us and the Refuge! Membership fees and cash donations go towards Refuge projects..."*

## Two Summer Camps for Children to be Held at Green Point

*By Becky Goche, Park Ranger*

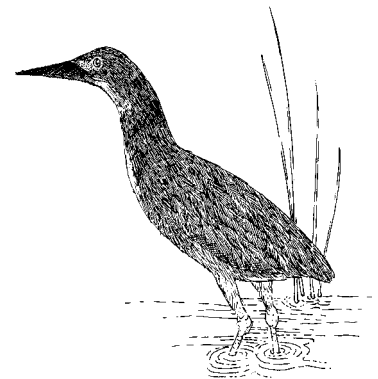
Just because it's summer, doesn't mean that your kids have to stop learning! The Refuge and the Friends of Shiawassee NWR are sponsoring two different camps this summer for children. If you are a parent looking for a good learning environment and lots of fun for your child, check these out!

### **Summer Discovery Camp**

The Summer Discovery Camp for children between the ages of 4- and 6-years-old is June 25 and 26. The camp runs from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon both days. Children will explore the habitats and wildlife at Green Point Environmental Learning Center. Lots of hands-on activities, crafts, games, stories and fun are planned! Parents are welcome to either drop off their child or spend the morning with them. We ask that other siblings not attend with their brother or sister. A light snack will be offered each day. Cost for this camp is \$5 per child. This non-refundable fee must be received by June 13 to hold the child's spot. Pre-registration is required by calling (989) 759-1669. Space is limited to 30 children.

### **Jr. Refuge Manager Academy**

The Jr. Refuge Manager Academy is for children entering the third and fourth grades in the fall. The Academy is held July 15, 16 and 17, and runs from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon all days. Children will learn what it takes to operate a National Wildlife Refuge through fun, hands-on activities. On the final day, a special guided tour of the Refuge is planned for the Academy participants and their families, followed by a graduation ceremony. Snacks will be offered each day. Cost for this camp is \$15. Pre-registration is required by calling (989) 759-1669. Space is limited to 20 children.



*Green Heron*

Shiawassee NWR  
6975 Mower Rd.  
Saginaw, MI 48601  
Phone: 989-777-5930  
Fax: 989-777-9200  
Hours: M - F, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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**We're on the web!**  
[Http://midwest.fws.gov/  
shiawassee](http://midwest.fws.gov/shiawassee)



*Celebrating a  
Century  
of Conservation!*



## Refuge Volunteer Appreciation Potluck Dinner Planned for June 12

*by Becky Goche, Park Ranger/Volunteer Coordinator*

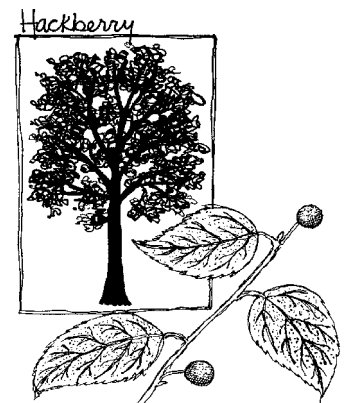
The Shiawassee NWR will host its annual Refuge Volunteer Appreciation Potluck Dinner on Thursday, June 12, 2003, at 6:00 p.m. The potluck will be held at the Green Point Environmental Learning Center, 3010 Maple Street in Saginaw. All Refuge volunteers and their families are cordially invited to attend!

Refuge staff will recognize all of those volunteers who donated their time between October 1, 2001 and September 30, 2002. The 2002 Refuge Volunteer of the Year will also be awarded. If you have not turned in your hours for this time period, please do so as soon as possible, so that we can recognize you! Call Becky Goche at (989) 759-1669, if you have hours to turn in.

We ask that all who attend bring a dish to share. The

Refuge will furnish the main meat dishes, beverages and table service. Dress in comfortable, cool clothes because Green Point can get quite warm in June! If you plan on attending, please call Becky Goche at (989) 759-1669 or e-mail [Becky\\_Goche@fws.gov](mailto:Becky_Goche@fws.gov) by Monday, June 9, with how many will be attending. We need to let the caterer know how much to bring. Hope to see you all there!

*Look inside to learn more  
about the Hackberry tree!*



# Calendar of Events



## 2003 Refuge Photo Contest

**September 1, 2002 to August 31, 2003**

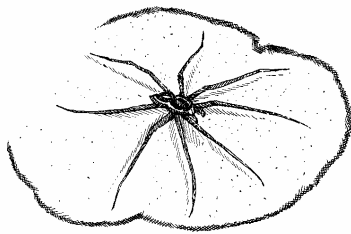
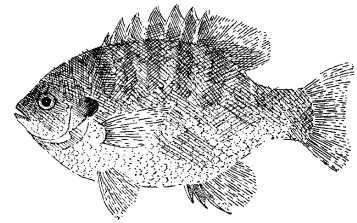
Visit the Refuge and take some photos and then enter our 2003 Photo Contest! Up to 3 entries total per person may be submitted. Visit our website for more information.

## Kids' Free Fishing Fun Day

**June 7, 2003, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon**

**Registration begins at 8:00 a.m.**

Held at Ojibway Island in Saginaw. Contest is open to children between the ages of 3- and 15-years-old. Lots of prizes to win. Many free refreshments. Bring your own fishing poles and bait.



## Summer Discovery Camp

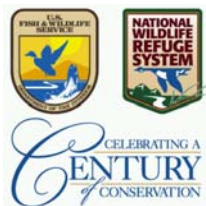
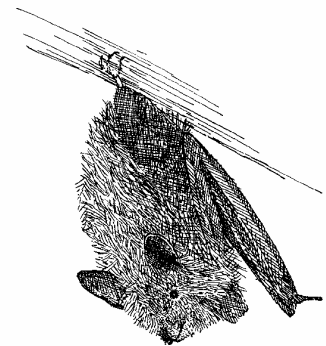
**June 25 & 26, 2003, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon**

For children between the ages of 4- and 6-years-old. Children learn about the wildlife and habitats at Green Point through lots of crafts, games, stories, and other activities. A light snack is provided. Cost for the camp is \$5 per child. Pre-registration is required by calling (989) 759-1669. Space is limited.

## Jr. Refuge Manager Academy

**July 15, 16 & 17, 2003, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon**

For children entering third and fourth grades this fall. Learn how to manage a National Wildlife Refuge through fun, hands-on activities. On the final day, children will take a guided tour of the Refuge with their families, followed by a special graduation ceremony. Light snacks are provided each day. Cost for the camp is \$15 per child. Pre-registration is required by calling (989) 759-1669. Space is limited.



## Looking Ahead – Mark These Dates

September 6 & 7, 2003 – Refuge Open House Weekend

September 26 to 28, 2003 – Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Centennial Event